

Dear readers,

Welcome to the second edition of the new EU Civil Society Contact Group weekly mailing. I take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new CSCG coordinator since 4th of February. I apologize for the delay in sending a new mailing, due to technical problems with the new template. As you will see, for the time being we will use a more basic layout.

The weekly mailing will keep you posted about the EU Civil Society Contact Group activities and provide you with information on EU policy developments relevant for civil society organisations. It will monitor:

- European Parliament elections in June 2009: Find our [toolkit](#) here.
- EU budget review 2008-2009: [A value based EU budget for the future!](#)
- [Civil dialogue: How to make it work better!](#)
- Transparency of EU policy making: [Lobby register](#) and [access to documents](#)
- The ratification of the Lisbon Treaty and its article 11 on participatory democracy

... and other relevant developments.

Enjoy your reading!
Laetitia

EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

- **Five members of the European Commission are set to quit their jobs to run in next June's elections to the European Parliament (EurActiv)**

“Viviane Reding (information society), Louis Michel (humanitarian aid), Janez Potočnik (research), Danuta Hübner (regional policy) and Ján Figel' (education) have already informed Commission President José Manuel Barroso of their intention to return to their home countries to campaign for the European Parliament elections, a top official said.”

read more on [Euractiv](#)

TRANSPARENCY OF EU POLICY MAKING

- **ALTER-EU - the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency - published last week a first, preliminary assessment of the Commission's Lobby register.**

It is now more than seven months since the European Commission launched a voluntary lobby transparency register. The Commission has said it will carry out a review of the register in June 2009, including an assessment of whether the levels of compliance are satisfactory. A preliminary analysis by ALTER-EU shows that the voluntary approach is failing: the compliance rate is alarmingly low and the overall quality of information disclosed is very poor, except for those NGOs following the [Guidelines](#) provided by the EU Civil Society Contact Group.

Less than 20% of Brussels-based lobby entities have registered so far, based on the European Parliament's estimate of 2,600 lobby groups with offices in Brussels, and registration levels are low for all categories of 'interest representatives', whether these are lobby firms, corporations, industry lobby groups, think tanks, law firms, NGOs or trade unions lobbying the EU institutions. In particular, large law firms which provide lobbying services and major Brussels-based think tanks appear to be boycotting the register.

Read the [full report](#) of ALTER-EU

- **Ombudsman criticises Commission for inadequate register of documents**

The European Ombudsman, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, has urged the European Commission to set up a comprehensive register of the documents it produces or receives. This follows a complaint from the British NGO, Statewatch, about the Commission's failure to register the vast majority of its documents. According to the Commission, the establishment of a comprehensive register is impossible at this point in time, mainly because of the use of incompatible registers in its different departments. The Ombudsman was unconvinced. He considered the Commission's failure to comply with the legal obligation to establish such a register to constitute maladministration.

read the full [decision](#) of the [Ombudsman](#)

LISBON TREATY

- **Ireland: opinion poll in favour of treaty**

According to an opinion poll by Lansdowne Market Research, published on 30th January the Irish are now mainly in favour of the European Lisbon Treaty which they rejected during a referendum in June last; the economic crisis has led to a complete turn around in opinion. 58% of those interviewed "totally agreed" or "agreed" with the theory that Ireland would vote "yes" in the next referendum on the treaty. 29% "totally disapproved" or "disapproved". 12% do not have an opinion. According to the survey undertaken by Red C and published on 1st February by the "Sunday Business Post" 2/3 of the Irish would vote in favour of the ratification of the European Lisbon Treaty if a second referendum were to be organised in 2009. 58% of those interviewed said they supported the text to reform the European institutions, whilst 28% said they are against it and 14% were undecided.

Read more on [thepost.ie](#)

Download the [full survey](#)

- **German court to begin hearing on EU Treaty - 10.02.2009**

Germany's highest court will today begin a hearing on whether the EU's Lisbon treaty undermines the country's own constitution by weakening the power of national parliaments.

Read more on [euobserver](#)

- **Czech Republic: Postponement 2**

Members of the Czech parliament decided on 4th February to postpone to 17th February at the earliest their vote on the Lisbon Treaty. When debates opened on 3rd February, the Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek requested that the vote be postponed to give ad hoc parliamentary commissions time to submit their findings. Members of Parliament decided by 115 votes in favour, 73 against and 6 abstentions, to follow this advice. The vote had already been postponed once, from December to the beginning of February.

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